

West End has none at present.  
Introduces national scene to Buckville, its  
at the foot of D. Buckle. (C.S.P.)

Mr. ROCKE  
307 Woodland Road  
Rockville, MD 20850

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Chestnut Lodge Activity Center :  
Museum, - Ideal floor space + ADA friendly  
Community Center for Adult End - currently none.  
Private Residence w/ in home commercial kitchen  
for caterer  
Private Residence  
Rental Hall for meetings, receptions, etc.

While the other concepts may have been suggested,  
I think this is an ideal site for a museum --  
it has an open floor plan, is convenient to I-270,  
not far from Rockville Metro Station & a bus line  
stop, and offers flexibility. There is room to consider  
permanent or semi-permanent displays as well as to  
spotlight traveling material.

In conclusion, there are so few properties in Rockville  
reflective of modern design and this is the jewel to  
such. This is an important opportunity to say  
that Rockville values its preservation initiative and  
has shown its merit to its citizens. Rockville is a  
city of neighborhoods and this is perhaps our most  
important as it helped set standards across America  
with integrative treatment and in the process has left us  
some wonderful and unusual structures of merit.

# Washington Waldorf School

4000 Sangamore Road, Bethesda, Maryland 20816

January 15, 2004

Historic District Commission  
City of Rockville  
Rockville City Hall  
111 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Re: Evaluation for Historical, Architectural or Cultural Significance:  
Activities Building at Chestnut Lodge, 500 West Montgomery Avenue

Dear Ms. Neal Powell and Members of the Commission:

I am a member of the Board of the Washington Waldorf School, the previous owner of the property that is the subject of the Application now pending before this Board. Even though we no longer own the property, we continue to have a beneficial interest in it and a stake in the outcome of this proceeding.

I am a resident of the City of Rockville as well, and I appreciate the opportunity to address this Commission once again.

I would like to begin with a request for a correction of the Staff Analysis dated January 15, 2004 and of the record of the prior hearing on this application. First, page 3 of the report includes a reference to my testimony at the hearing held on December 18, 2003. While I did not submit a written statement, I believe that this summary ascribes to me a statement that I did not make. While I am quite certain that I said that approval of this application would impose a financial hardship on the School, I am quite certain that I did not say that such a decision would force financial failure. It is true that approval of the application would have financial consequences for our School. However, I am proud to say that due to the strong support by our school community for the education that we provide, a decision to recommend historic designation would not force financial failure of the School.

Second, the Staff Analysis refers to this building as the Choethiel Woodward Smith Community Center Building. While Ms. Smith was indeed the architect for this building, there is no record that it has ever been referred to in that way on any documents or that it was named in her honor at any time. It has always been referred to as the Activities Building. Neither the owners of Chestnut Lodge before the Waldorf School,

nor the School, ever bestowed upon Ms. Smith the honor of naming this building for her. Referring to the building in this way appears to be an inappropriate attempt to bestow upon the building more importance than any of its owners have ever seen fit to bestow. It is the Activities Building, or the Cafeteria, nothing more.

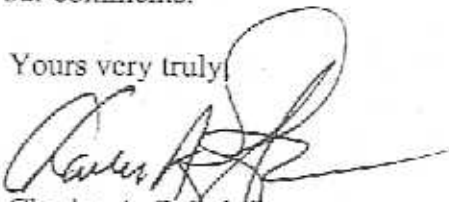
Finally, I want to return to one point that I made when I spoke to this Commission on December 18. I explained then that the Waldorf School science curriculum focuses on teaching through observation of occurrences in nature to understand the truth. As educators and parents, that is what we strive for – finding a way for our children to know and understand and relate to the truth. With respect to this building, the record shows the truth – that is, it is not worthy of historic designation. I do not dispute that Ms. Smith was an architect of some local renown, or that the Bullard family and the staff they assembled at Chestnut Lodge were visionaries in the mental health profession. I do not dispute either that Ms. Smith and the Bullards may have had high hopes that this building would create a new standard, a new approach to treatment of the patients at Chestnut Lodge.

However, the evidence that you heard on December 18 from Ms. Woodward who was a head nurse at Chestnut Lodge during many of the years that this building was in service, demonstrates that the reality is far different. Despite the rhapsodic musings of journalists at the time the building was designed and of the architectural historians and others who are trying to paint a picture of this building as an enormous advance in mental health treatment, the reality is that it was used principally for patients to meet staff who then took them to other parts of the campus for activities. The building did not meet its intended objective. Moreover, preservation of the building will not cause realization of that dream. This building's day, if it ever dawned at all, has passed.

The best way to preserve the Bullards' and Ms. Smith's hopes for the Activities Center is to permit the preservation of a record of its creation and of the ideas that lay at the foundation of the applicants' arguments for preservation of the building itself. That way, no one will ever have to know that those seeds of a creative new therapeutic methodology never bore fruit in this building. The Waldorf School renews its request that this Commission deny the application.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Yours very truly,



Charles A. Spizulnik  
Board Member

To: The Rockville Historic District Commission

From: Pat Reber, Washington Waldorf parent, Rockville resident

January 15, 2004

No one challenges the historic significance of the Chestnut Lodge property, and the role the institute played in pioneering psychoanalysis to treat mental illness. But during all the years it was owned by the Bullard family, the owners managed to stave off efforts by the historic community to have any part of it designated as historic.

When the Washington Waldorf School bought the property in 2001, the school hoped to fulfil a longtime dream of a permanent residence and leave the rented school it has occupied for decades in Bethesda. My daughter started attending the school that year, and even then, it was apparent that the Chestnut Lodge project was ambitious, for we are only 200 families and the school has no wealthy alumni or endowments. We have nonprofit status.

The school was optimistic however and went ahead with the purchase, in full agreement that the old hotel building and the cathedral of oaks should be designated and preserved as historic – an idea that appealed to the school's philosophy of education and life. I've owned a home in Rockville for 18 years, and as a resident and one-time local editor and reporter, I also knew that the public identifies those front buildings as representing the history of Chestnut Lodge.

But, after the purchase, Rockville City Council moved with astonishing speed to designate more buildings, back buildings, cottages and even a tattered old barn, structures far back from the road. This seriously handicapped anyone's ability to develop the property.

Even more disconcerting was the last minute bid to designate yet another building on the property – one designed by a U.S. government architect, Chloethiel Woodward Smith, in the mid to late 1950s. The building has been poorly maintained, is apparently full of asbestos and lead, and is hardly a sweeping example of 20th century modernism.

Yet a group called "The Recent Past Preservation Network" asked for the designation, claiming that Smith was a nationally recognized woman working in a field dominated by men at the time, and that the building represented a breakthrough in mental health treatment by allowing the mentally ill to have recreation behind glass walls. On the surface, these arguments were appealing, and I personally have always advocated recognition of women's achievements.

But at the December historic commission hearings, a woman who lives in the West End of Rockville and worked as a head nurse at the psychiatric institute, Patricia Woodward, testified against designation because the building was never used for treatment or recreation.

"The center was important for professional meetings, but not for treatment. I personally would not vote for this to be designated. It wasn't that important," said Patricia Woodward.

In addition to the fact that Smith commands neither world nor national recognition, her fame mainly came from her work as the chief planner for the Federal Housing Administration, where she was the chief architect of urban renewal in Southwest Washington and oversaw the tearing down of intact – and possibly historic? – homes and the construction of high rise public housing. This approach had devastating affect on the community's infrastructure.

Is this an architect who should be honoured for questionable contributions to Chestnut Lodge? Isn't there a limit to how many buildings can be designated historic on a property?



Mayor Larry Giammo has called Smith a world famous architect worthy of preservation, but I don't understand where that information is coming from. We also point out that commissioner Andrea Hartranft recused herself from the issue because her husband was one of the applicants for historic designation.

Interestingly, Peerless Rockville opposes the designation.

The application to have this obscure, unattractive building designated historic has really been the last and unfair blow to the Washington Waldorf school and has left many of us in Rockville wondering how and why this has happened, and if perhaps other motivations – such as limiting development on the property – outweigh any true interest in historical preservation.

Aside from my own interests as a school parent, it would seem that a vote to designate this building would set questionable precedent for much of Rockville.

Pat Reber, 301 424 8164